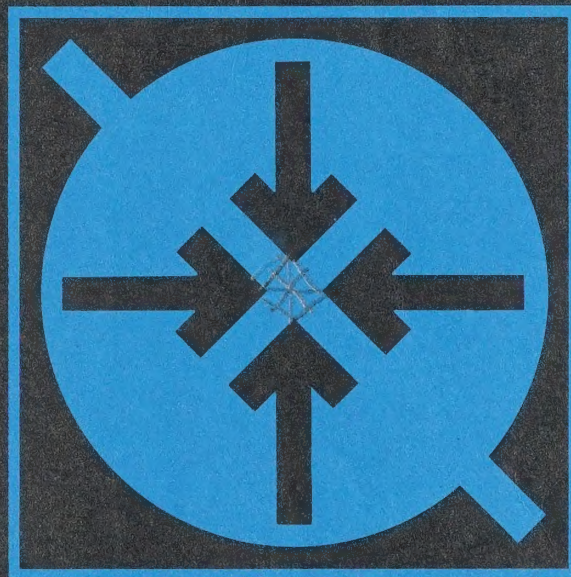


Newsletter

Blissymbolics
Communication
Foundation

March 1976
Volume 2, no.3



BLISSYMBOLICS COMMUNICATION FOUNDATION

Executive Director	Harry Silverman
Programme Director	Shirley McNaughton
Associate Programme Director	Barbara Kates
Administrative Assistant	Carol Ashford
Programme Assistant	Jinny Storr
Secretary	Shirley McKee
Newsletter Editor	Barbara Rush
Assistant Editor	Lois Valentic

The purpose of this newsletter is to publish articles and news items concerning the Bliss Symbol System which utilizes visual symbols as a substitute to verbal communication for physically handicapped children without speech.

SUBSCRIPTIONS for the remaining issue of Volume 2 are still available and may be obtained by sending a cheque for \$1.50 to the following address.
A few back copies of Volume 2, #3 are available at no extra charge.

Blissymbolics Communication Foundation
862 Eglinton Avenue East,
Toronto, Ontario. M4G 2L1

ARTICLES for the newsletter should be sent to:

Mrs. Barbara Rush,
Editor, B.C.F. Newsletter,
64 Magnolia Drive,
Hamilton, Ontario. L9C 5T2

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NOTES FROM THE EDITOR

Two upcoming workshops will interest those in the Quebec and surrounding area. The Bliss Resource Centre in Montreal will be hosting a workshop in French (see article "Atelier 'Bliss'") on April 28-30th. Details of the programme and an application form are included in the article. They will also be presenting a 3-day English workshop - tentative dates: May 19-21st. Anyone interested in further details and an application form should contact:

Monique Germain-Bovcher,
324 Couperin #5,
Laval, Quebec, H7N 1B6

Some of you may remember the interesting articles sent in earlier by Hugh Nelson concerning the symbol programme at the Rideau Regional Centre in Smith Falls, Ontario. Approximately 25 teenagers and young people are currently enrolled in their programme. They are now producing a "Symbol Paper" which they wish to share with other symbol users. The cost is just the price of a stamped addressed envelope for each issue. Should you be interested in receiving this publication (and I strongly recommend it) please read "A Symbol Paper for Symbol Users".

My mother has just returned from a year's stay in Australia and had the pleasure of seeing Charles Bliss on television quite a few times. Apparently he is a popular guest on talk shows but his work is not taken seriously. My mother brought back with her a newspaper clipping which I found very interesting and have included in this newsletter. More than merely illustrating his life, it captures the spirit of this truly magnificent man. I hope you enjoy it.

One of the benefits of attending a workshop is meeting and talking with other people. During last October's workshop I was fortunate enough to be placed at lunch with Ruth Harrington whose daughter, Kari, was a symbol student at O.C.C.C. For those of you who have seen "Mr. Symbol Man", you may recall scenes of Kari with her family at home. Ruth told me of Kari's move from O.C.C.C. to her local community school and I asked her to write a few lines concerning school integration for the newsletter. It is a beautiful statement and an inspiration to us all. We were first introduced to Kari during Ruth's criticism rebuttal contained in issue #5 of May 1975, so this new article is entitled "Kari continued!"

NEWS in BRIEF:

- The B.C.F. are planning to hold two fall Workshops in Toronto. One for advanced instruction and the other for beginners. Further details will be published in the June newsletter.
- The Ottawa Resource Centre held a 3-day workshop March 15-17th.
- The Sarnia Resource Centre has completed a workshop for beginners held on five consecutive Friday afternoons.
- Mary Snetsinger's class at O.C.C.C. utilized Valentine's Day to begin a theme on heart symbols.

- Geb Verbourg has joined the B.C.F. research staff as a consultant in data analysis with responsibility for organizing material.
- All instructors involved in the recent research study have been invited to a workshop to be held in Toronto, May 12-15th. If you participated in this study and have not received an invitation, please write to the B.C.F. Invitations were sent to the Administrators of the participating centres.
- The first B.C.F. Bulletin is due April 1st. To ensure that you are on the B.C.F. mailing list please complete the form at the back of this issue - there is no charge for the Bulletin.
- The B.C.F. is actively involved in planning for symbol communication at the Wheelchair Olympics to be held in Montreal this year. More details on this in the next newsletter.
- Brian Bobbie of the National Film Board is preparing a slide collection as an assist to instructors introducing symbols to children. 15 sets will be produced with 50 slides to a set. The first ten sets will be distributed to B.C.F. resource centres for loan to area symbol users. If the demand for this teaching aid is sufficient, reproduction and sale of the sets will be considered.

... ..

Many thanks to those who sent in material for this issue. The name of the game is "COMMUNICATION" so let's hear from YOU this time. The next and last issue in this subscription series will be published in June. Please mail articles by May 15th.

Barbara Rush
Editor

A SYMBOL PAPER FOR SYMBOL USERS

We must ask all the people who want a symbol paper to send us a stamped envelope with their address on it to help in the cost of the printing. Also don't forget to send your stories and comments to us. The next issue will be out in April 1976.

The editor has applied to the Blissymbolics Communication Foundation for a sub-license for the printing of the "Rideau Regional Centre Symbol Paper". Following the signing of the sub-license, the symbols used on or rather in the newsletter will be submitted to the Blissymbolics Communication Foundation for approval with regard to composition and organization of symbol elements. Symbols which appear between combine symbols will be constituted exactly as the writer indicates. Symbols appearing without combine symbols will appear in a form consistent with Blissymbolics. Symbols will continue to be hand-drawn until a standard method of production of symbols can be developed. This issue of the newsletter contains symbol stories reproduced exactly as indicated by the writers. Notification of the signing of the sub-license will be made in the April issue of the newsletter.

The people responsible for putting out the "Symbol Paper" are Russell Cecchini, Editor, Carol MacLauchlan, Communication Instructor at Rideau Regional Centre, and Hugh Nelson, Communication Instructor at Rideau Regional Centre. Please direct all mail to one of these people. Also could you please let us know if anyone sending in stories or letters, has permission to have last names included.

Write to: "Symbol Paper"
Bliss Symbol Programme,
Communication Dept.,
Rideau Regional Centre,
Box 2000,
Smith Falls, Ontario.
Canada. K7A 4T7

A symbol colouring book is being made. It is not published yet. We would like to know if you like the idea, as illustrated. Please write to us and tell us what you think. Write to the same address as above.

Hugh Nelson
Russell Cecchini
Carol MacLauchlan

"ESCAPING THE TYRANNY OF TONGUES"

The Sign Language of a Secular Saint

Even before I start, words fail me. Perhaps it's because I want to describe a man who loathes words, seeing them as murderous and divisive.

He came to my office to communicate in symbols as simple, vivacious and innocent as the facial expressions of Harpo Marx, a man he greatly resembles.

And although his contribution to humanity has been praised by men like Bertrand Russell, Julian Huxley and Buckminster Fuller, Charles Bliss (for that's his adopted name) would not be insulted by a comparison to a clown. For Charles loves to laugh and, through a long, difficult and extraordinary life, has always yearned to be a comedian.

Almost 80 years old, Charles was born in the world of Fiddler on the Roof ("I have seen it seven times," he says, "and every time I cried my heart out") to Jewish parents near the Russian border of old Austria.

His father was "an optician, a mechanic, an electrician and a woodturner" and Charles was entranced by the magics of his workshop, by the symbols he saw on his blueprints.

From his father Charles learnt that numbers were universally understood as were scientific symbols like H_2O . "Yet men called the wonderful liquid, waser, by so many names. Water, aqua, agua, eau, voda. It didn't seem to make sense."

Moreover, the child learnt to fear the Babel of many tongues he heard around him for they spoke (or chanted) of racial hatreds.

Each year his family, as poor as synagogue mice, had to endure the bitterness of the winter that swept down from the Russian steppes. And in 1905, the snow brought with it survivors of the Tsar's murderous campaign against the Jews, the first intimation of the fate that was to engulf him.

Having graduated from Vienna University as a chemical engineer, Charles was soon to be caught up in the greatest pogrom of them all. In the 1930s he found himself in Dachau and then in Buchenwald.

(Forty years later, the old man stands by my desk and sings the songs of the camp in tremulous Yiddish, telling how he translated the lyrics from the German for those prisoners who loathed their captors' language.)

Nonetheless he managed to communicate to inmates and gaolers alike through the international language of music. "I would make a dress shirt from cardboard and paint on a bow tie. Then I would tell jokes and play my banjo."

Even in the concentration camp Charles' love of life and of mankind sustained him. He would tell his Nazi captors that he forgave them, explaining that they were victims of words. And somehow his beliefs, communicated for, at the risk of their own lives, Nazi officers smuggled him from the camp.

But he and his beloved, Goyishe wife Clare were to remain separated, until after remarkable odysseys that took them through a score of countries they enjoyed a rapturous reunion in Shanghai on the Christmas Eve of 1940.

I don't have the space to give even a brief resume of the following years, except to note that they involved further internment, this time in a Japanese concentration camp.

But the essential thing is that Charles was exposed to the ideographic, pictorial language of the Chinese and came to share Gottfried Leibnitz's ancient dream of a universal symbolism, a language of simple hieroglyphs that every man, every child could read.

At the war's end, Charles changed his surname from the warlike Blitz to the peaceful, inspirational Bliss. And Charles and Clare immigrated to Australia with their vision splendid.

Once in Sydney, Charles resumed what was to be his life's work - the devising of symbols that were simple not only in design but in their moral implications. Thus "conflict" is suggested by opposing arrows, "giving" by an arrow rising from a bowl, "God" by a triangle. (Here Charles went back to the ancient Greeks and to the universal harmony they found in geometry.)

Soon he'd devised a few hundred such Blissymbols, which were, he insisted, sufficient to communicate the most complex of ideas. And while books and pamphlets poured from Charles, Clare wrote 6000 letters to politicians, educators, librarians and world leaders asking for their support. Needless to say, few of the letters were answered, but the notable - and enthusiastic - exceptions included Russell and Huxley.

However, the world's overwhelming apathy and disinterest crushed Charles' spirits and his deepening despair killed Clare. "She died of a broken heart," says Charles, who consoles himself with simple pantheism. "But her beauty lives on in all that is beautiful."

The story might have ended there, except for the phenomenon of world tourism. So many nations needed symbols that international travellers could understand, symbols for every thing from road hazards to toilets. And Charles found his ideas being plagiarised from the libraries in which his self-published books had lain neglected.

So Charles' spirits revived and once more, he battled on.

But the breakthrough for Bliss came from an unexpected source, from the handicapped children of Canada. Aided by supporters like Doug Everingham, his Blissymbols caught the attention of teachers of spastics in Toronto.

The students were not only illiterate but speechless and had no way of communicating with each other or the world. Yet these children took readily to Blissymbolics, to the simple shapes suggesting mother, father, house, toy, book.

Within hours of being exposed to the symbols they could understand, constructing sentences by pointing to them in sequence. They could communicate not only specific needs but abstract ideas. Just as Braille had liberated the blind from their darkness, Bliss had freed these children from their loneliness.

Recently the Canadians, in association with Film Australia, made a film on Bliss' life and the impact of his work. Called Mr. Symbol Man, it is a joyous and, yes, blissful film that has won standing ovations at the Sydney and Canberra film festivals.

And on both occasions, the ebullient Charles Bliss was there to give a short address. "I will give you a very short address," he said. "The address of my boarding house: 2 Vickers Street, Coogee, post code 2034," for Charles sees every meeting as an opportunity to spread his gospel, as a chance to win allies to his cause.

Given our proud tradition of hostility about ideas and eccentrics, Charles is dismissed as a raving rathbag by Australian educationists. His belief that ethics is a natural force like electricity is too naive to commend itself to the academic community, and, for all his genius, the love and energy that flows from this Jewish leprechaun seems to embarrass and alienate the bureaucrat.

For my own part, I regard Charles with respect and affection. He has the ability of a Julius Sumner Miller to communicate ideas and the physical drive that made the late Percy Cerutty so formidable.

And I mustn't forget to restate that he has the childlike charm of that mute Marx brother. And like the Harpo who's for ever blowing his car horn or plucking at his strings, the Charles Bliss who can't stop drawing his symbols on scraps of paper seems some sort of secular saint.

I hear that the ABC has finally purchased Mr. Symbol Man for its CHEQUERBOARD series. But that's simply not good enough. Charles must be given a series of his own, like Sumner Miller, so that he can seek support for his theories, so that he can change wicked wind-mills of words.

Even if you reject his pictorial pidgin, you'll find that the man himself is magnificent.

Phillip Adams,
Reporter,
"Australian Saturday Review"

USE OF EYEPOINTING TO INDICATE BLISSYMBOLS

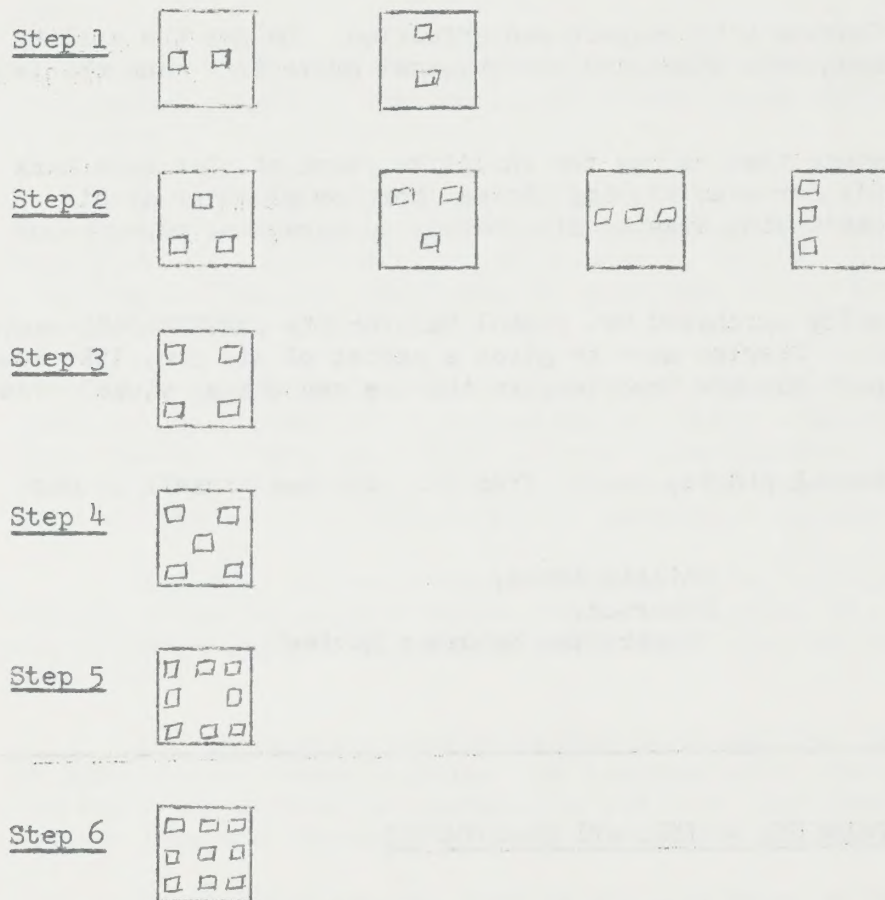
At our school we have two cerebral palsied children, ages 3 and 10 who are severely involved; they do not have voluntary and/or functional use of any body parts other than their eyes. Therefore these children could not operate an electronic switch or manually point. Both children were functioning at a prereading level and met the criteria for introducing Blissymbols. Success with Blissymbols seemed likely if we could make the symbols accessible to the children.

Based on the following observations, we thought symbols could perhaps be made accessible via eye pointing: 1.) Given a choice of two objects or pictures (e.g. what he/she wanted to wear, to eat or to play with), eye pointing was precise and 2.) no nystagmus was present.

As the first 30 symbols were taught, a specific program was set up to improve and expand the number of spots to which each child could eye point. Eye pointing skills were worked on as a separate activity and in conjunction with symbol instruction.

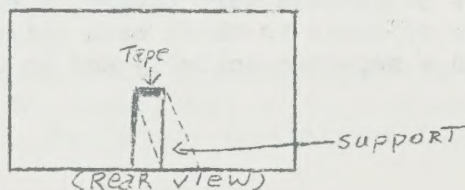
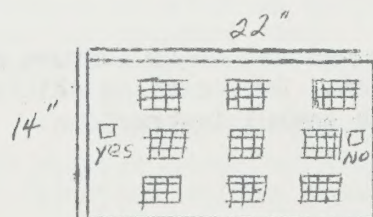
Numerous activities can be adapted and made accessible to an eye pointing response. Flannel boards, magnetic boards, and pocket charts are useful for the mounting of pictures, colors, shapes, etc. From the mounted items the child eye points his response. Some activities that can be adapted in this manner are 1.) lotto games, 2.) sorting, matching, and classification activities, 3.) specific language tasks--learning syntax, vocabulary, and concepts, and 4.) math problems, games, and activities.

The following is a suggested sequence for gradually increasing the number of positions to which a child can eye point.



When a child could consistently eye point to two positions, we moved on to Step 2, etc. We felt that for a 100 or 200 display to be accessible to a child he should be able to eye point to nine different positions. Therefore, mastery of Step 6 coincided with introduction of a 100 symbol display which was separated into nine squares and rectangles.

These squares and rectangles were mounted on a sheet of black paper; the yes and no symbols were mounted on the right and left sides, respectively of the display.



The symbols were mounted on an opaque background as opposed to a see-through display to provide a more definite figure-ground relationship. We felt it would be easier for the children to perceive symbols on opaque paper. The display was placed in a plexiglass "sandwich" that had a plexiglass support (11" x 4") taped to the back. This support could hold the board upright on the wheelchair tray, floor, etc. to enable the child to easily view the symbols. The three open sides of the board were taped so that when the board was not in use and was flat on the tray, the child could eat, finger paint, etc., on the board without harming the symbols. (A wooden tray with $2\frac{1}{2}$ " molding on the sides was mounted on the wheelchairs to hold the plexiglass container). When the board was "up" and the child was communicating, the following procedure was used.

The adult sat next to the child's wheelchair to see the board and the child's face. Then--

1. The child looked at a square or rectangle that contained the desired symbol.
2. The adult pointed to the square he thought the child had indicated and said something like, "Is the symbol in this square?"
3. The child indicated yes or no.
4. If no, the child looked again at the desired square and the adult asked again until a yes response was produced.
5. If and when the child indicated yes, the adult asked which color the symbol was by saying something like "Is the symbol colored white, blue, or green? White? (pause) Blue? (pause) Green? (pause)." After each color was named, the adult pauses and the child says yes or no. Once the child says yes....
6. The adult slowly touches the appropriate colored symbols from top to bottom in that square.
7. The child looks at yes when the adult touches the desired symbol and the adult records that symbol.

Although the system involves a number of steps, it is relatively easy for an adult to follow after one or two interactions with an eye pointing child.

Although we found this to be the only successful way to make symbols accessible to children who were so severely physically handicapped, we realized that limitations did exist. 1.) The output is slower than with a child who can manually point and the adult must spend more time with the child to obtain a message. 2.) The children have no means of telling adults that they wish to communicate other than by whining which is socially inappropriate. We have not been able to solve this problem other than by asking the child numerous times during the day if he has something to say. 3.) The student may forget which symbols he has used. Our eye pointing students seem to fatigue more easily than the students who can manually point and thus, we feel it is essential to record the child's symbol output not only to document what the child has said but also to occasionally refresh his memory. 4.) The 100 symbol proved to be overwhelming to our youngest child (4 years old) who could not process all the visual stimuli. We remedied this by covering symbols which had not been taught and gradually removing the covers as the child learned the symbols.

These limitations were minor, however, in light of the extraordinary and exciting changes that occurred emotionally, psychologically, and socially in the children who could eye point to Blissymbols.

Joan Sammarco and Bobbie Vender
Julia S. Molloy Education Centre
Morton Grove, Illinois

KARI CONTINUED ! !

Five years ago, when Kari first began to go to school at the Ontario Crippled Children's Centre, I don't think we ever even dreamed that she would one day be going to school here in Markham. What wonderful, fruitful years have passed since then!

Talk of possibly integrating her into a Special Education Class in our home community began early last spring and the prospect for us was an exciting one.

Kari had often said she wished she could go to the same school as her brother and sister, - especially when I was waking her up at 6:30 in the morning for that long taxi ride into the Centre. She thought it would be great to drive to school in her new electric wheelchair, go out to play at recess and to come home for lunch at noon. These things were a 'big deal' to her and I really don't think she ever thought too much beyond them. Our personal feelings went much deeper than that as you can imagine.

The timing seemed to be right. She could communicate well with symbols (if she wanted to) and her skill at whizzing around in her electric chair would give her an independence in moving about the school, as well as the opportunity to interact with the children in the playground.

The physical set up of the school was ideal. First of all, the Special Education Class for this area of the County just happened to be at our local school - at most, a five minute wheelchair drive straight up the street from our house. No curbs or barriers of any sort blocked the way. The only thing of any concern was a fairly busy street in front of the school, which would have to be crossed. A little instruction in the safety rules and lots of opportunities to drive in traffic soon lessened our worry about that. The school, itself, was built all on ground level and had only one step at the entrance to be contended with. (Incidentally, that was ramped within a day or two of her arrival.)

We were very aware of the feelings Kari might have - being the only one confined to a wheelchair in a school where there were hundreds of running, jumping, boisterous children. Already, we had many occasions when she was dejected because of the unfairness of her lot, and, if anything, this new setting could only intensify those feelings. However, her wheelchair and her physical limitations are the facts of life which she must face and accept. Keeping her in a more protected setting wasn't going to change this. Knowing how much spunk she really has, we felt she could cope.

Now the decision was up to the local school board. All the arrangements were handled by Mrs. Marion MacLeod at O.C.C.C., whose job it is to arrange school placements for the children, and of course, by Mrs. McNaughton and Mrs. Kates, who were involved because Kari was a symbol-speaking child.

I really know little of the attitude of the school board towards admitting Kari. I feel now that any hesitation, if there was any, was because they were concerned whether the program they had to offer would meet her needs. I'm sure the Board relied on the opinions of their special education consultant, Mrs. Hodson and the school principal, Mr. Davison, both of whom must have been greatly influenced by the classroom teacher with whom Kari was most likely to be placed.

Gwen Mann is one of those superb teachers who is knowledgeable about a variety of learning disabilities; has the warmth and understanding so needed when dealing with children who have special learning problems and has a well-founded confidence in her ability to find and carry out a programme that will meet individual needs. When you

add to all these virtues, her firm belief that, if it is at all possible, a child is much better off attending school in his home community, then you will know she was happy to accept Kari into her class.

As you can see, everything was unbelievably conducive for integration into this particular school. Only one vital thing remained to be settled and that was tioletting. I agreed to look after this - at least for the first while.

Since the number in the class was close to the maximum suggested for a class of this type, the Board agreed to hire a half-time teacher's aide, which they hoped would help to make up for some of the extra time having a child such as Kari would take up. I suppose it seemed logical that since I was willing to make myself available for the tioletting, I might be a reasonable choice for this position. Again, it is a tribute to Gwen that she agreed to tolerate a MOTHER in her classroom each morning.

Please don't think that having mother along was any comfort to Kari. The fact I'm there doesn't please her one little bit. It's true she has no concerns about her physical needs and I believe that has to be reassuring to her, even if she won't admit it - but there it ends! We made a pact at the start. Except for the tioletting and help in the gym, she will mind her own business and I will mind mine. I try! Sometimes I overstep the mark, though, and Kari puts me back in line. If the roads are clear, she won't even walk to school with me!

There was no question of fitting Kari into an existing class programme. Except for some group activities, each child has his own highly individualized course of study. Through the splendid co-operation of the O.C.C.C. and all the very special people there, Gwen learned what Kari's programme had been and carried on from there. As she got to know Kari better, she began to include other activities which she felt would be beneficial. The transition from one school to the other was so smooth I can find little to comment on.

Imagine, I have gone all this way and not even mentioned symbols!! After a brief exposure to them at the Centre and talks with Shirley McNaughton and Barb Kates, Gwen appeared quite confident that she would be able to understand what Kari was saying. Quite matter of factly, she did just that. Somehow, she tuned in quickly to Kari's combination of symbols, words, body language and whatever else she happened to use to get a message across. Looking on, I sometimes feel Kari doesn't make as good use of her symbols at school (for general conversation) as she does at home. However, I'm willing to admit that that could just be the mother in me which wants to say, "She can do so much better than that at home!" and if you're a teacher, I'm sure you've heard that one before!

At first, when she went off to music in another class or to films etc., she didn't want to take her symbol board with her, and this was fine. Lately though, I've noticed that either she or one of the other children have come back for it and on some occasions, she takes it down with her when she goes. The teachers involved are super and take the time to hear her out.

CONTINUED ON FOLLOWING PAGE

They even figured out that

\perp \pm \backslash \odot \square \gg \square \odot
I, me have, has a, an combine thing for body combine

(a Kari original) meant she was wearing a bra that day!

Kari doesn't seem to want to bother with her symbol board at recess or play times. I think, in part, having the tray on inhibits her driving. When the weather was good and she could get outside for recess, she wanted to be free to scoot around or play ball with one or two of the children who have become quite good friends with her. One of the things that she said bothered her was when the kids all hung around her chair and she couldn't move. (The interest was more in the electric chair and how it worked than anything else.) This may be part of the reason why she doesn't want to bother with the symbols then. Playtime is fairly limited. A symbol board suggests more hovering and, besides that, who wants to waste time talking?

The children in the class accepted Kari beautifully and were warm and friendly from the first moment. Very quickly, they learned to make way when the chair was on the move and they reacted little to the fact that she used symbols to talk. As they began to learn some of the symbols themselves, their interest in the board increased and some of them can easily read Kari's answers to specific questions. At Gwen's suggestion, some are going to the board for help in spelling a word they need. Such activities are encouraging more spontaneous interaction between the children.

Gwen is giving more concentrated symbol instruction to one little boy, who has language difficulties and it seems that symbols are going to be helpful to him. It has been such fun for Kari and I to watch Gwen's interest and enthusiasm grow. The classroom has taken on a new look, as symbols join the words on many of the displays. This is not being done for Kari or even Billy but because Gwen recognizes the learning potential in the symbols for all the children. Mr. Bliss would indeed be proud of her.

Except for the curiosity about the workings of the electric chair, which I mentioned before and which will pass in time, the atmosphere both in and out of school appears to be very, very comfortable for Kari. The smiling faces and cheery greetings she meets everywhere, must let her know everyone is glad she is there.

Even though I am long past the "few lines" Barbara asked me to write, I can't end off letting you think there have been no problems at all. You will see that they are not really problems of school integration but, certainly, they are a part of the whole picture of integration as we envision it.

The first one is SNOW. The mail may get through sleet and hail and whatever else the skies inflict upon us but wheelchairs don't! Electric wheelchairs, in particular. Even the manual chair can be very unco-operative when there are a few inches of white stuff. The school is near but, on some of those December days, it seemed a hundred miles away. The effort of pulling, pushing, lifting and hauling was tiring to say the least. And all those winter clothes

♡-!

Finally, we bought snow tires for the electric chair. They do provide a little better traction. A telephone call to the Department of Roads brought the most

help of all. Jonquil Crescent is now the best plowed road around. It also gets a generous sanding and salting, a treatment which side streets don't usually get out here any more. Fortunately, winter doesn't last forever and the past few snowless weeks have been beautiful.

The second problem was ME. The change in Kari's situation brought a big change in my own life style and I had many adjustments to make. My free time was now very limited. Suddenly, I was responsible for nearly all her physical needs for all seven days of the week. The dressing, undressing, toileting, exercising, transferring from one chair to another in the bad weather, all left me very tired at the beginning, especially when I was trying to meet the needs of the rest of my family as well.

However, time brings its own solutions. I really enjoy my mornings in the classroom. I let go many things which I used to think were important and, gradually, my life has again taken up a pattern that I am happy and comfortable with.

As to the future - who knows? I wouldn't want to turn back for anything but where Kari's capabilities will lead her remains to be seen.

For now, it is a beautiful thing to stand on my driveway and watch her head off to school on her own. More beautiful still, is the smile on her face as she turns around to make sure I'm not following her.

Ruth Harrington

COMMUNITY EDUCATION:

Over the past $2\frac{1}{2}$ years of teaching Bliss Symbols I have become increasingly aware of the importance of parents, staff, and community education to a Bliss Symbol Program. It doesn't really matter how many symbols Susie knows, or how complete her syntax is, if no one will use her board with her, because they are afraid of those strange drawings, or because they don't understand how or why Susie uses such a board.

There are a number of ways one can approach such a massive task. Just recently our centre obtained the movie "Mr. Symbolman," and notices such as the one displayed here, sent two weeks in advance to parents; local physicians, particularly those having close contact with our children and centre; teachers within special education and child development centres; speech pathologists and audiologists; bio-medical engineers; physical and occupational therapists, etc.

The purpose of showing the movie was not to provide depth instruction about the symbols; but, at an earlier point, to prompt people to evaluate those children and adults with whom they are working as to whether they have a functional communication system. Secondly, the movie could assist in making people aware that there are alternatives to verbal communication, one such being, the Bliss Symbolics.

Overall response to the movie was good. Attendance by professionals was quite good, while parent response was only fair.

There are various ways of educating; but, basic to all of these, is the attitude that everyone, whatever his training and background, may at sometime be in the position

of:

- meeting and talking to a person using a communication board.
- talking to others about alternate communication systems.
- supplying funding.

Given this perspective it is obviously extremely important not to miss an opportunity to educate someone about the symbols. This "education" may range from a 5 minute chat in the hall; to a formal presentation, to tours of your program.

CHEDOKE HOSPITALS



"MR. SYMBOLMAN"



a 50 minute movie concerning the Bliss Symbol Communication System created by Charles Bliss and its use with physically handicapped children at the Ontario Crippled Children's Centre.



Should be of interest to all those working with adults and children who have severe communication impairment.



PLACE: NASH LECTURE HALL



TIME: TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 3, 1976, 1200 hours - 1300 hours
1550 hours - 1650 hours



FOR FURTHER

Information: Contact Lynda Archer, Speech Pathologist,
Speech Department, Evel 1, Extension 232, or
Cerebral Palsy Centre 385-5391.

Lynda Archer, Speech Pathologist,
Chedoke Hospitals
Hamilton C.P. Centre

"TWELVE RULES"

(extracted from Frank Smith's book - Understanding Reading)

TWELVE RULES FOR READING TEACHERS

1. Aim for early mastery of the rules of reading.
2. Ensure that phonic skills are learned and used.
3. Teach letters or words one at a time, making sure each new letter or word is learned before moving on.
4. Make word-perfect reading the prime objective.
5. Discourage guessing; be sure children read carefully.
6. Encourage the avoidance of errors.
7. Provide immediate feedback.
8. Detect and correct inappropriate eye movements.
9. Identify and give special attention to problem readers as soon as possible.
10. Make sure children understand the importance of reading and the seriousness of falling behind.
11. Take the opportunity during reading instruction to improve spelling and written expression, and also insist on the best possible spoken English.
12. If the method you are using is unsatisfactory, try another. Always be alert for new materials and techniques.

The above represents what is termed a "top-down" or "model-matching" argument for viewing the reading process. The rules are all too often taken seriously. If one's view is that reading is simply the composite achievement of meshing letter-sound associations phrasing, perceptual training and various "attack" approaches, then these rules might be taken seriously indeed.

If however, one is primarily concerned with the meaning(s) conveyed, the message derived, the flow of information and the challenge of individual hypothesis-testing, then the rules presented can be viewed in the manner in which they were intended - humorously, facetiously, very tongue-in-cheek.

What is the relevance of this to symbol-using children? First we must consider the common experience of all these individuals. In examining what they consider to be their output, we see that their mode of expression is a series of meaning-based units, complete within themselves, capable of providing a complete thought with a single utterance. In learning the symbol itself, the components are themselves meaning-related not purely sight or sound-oriented. Once learned, the rules for expanded usage of the individual

symbols are minimal when compared to the rules of phonic-based approaches. Because each symbol conveys a wide range of meanings and therefore a broad challenge in terms of the combinations derived, the opportunities to explore, experiment, and test individual hypothesis are numerous. Further, the concept of error-avoidance, one which is very seriously considered in approaches involving skill attainment in parts-to-whole operations, is one receiving very minimal emphasis.

The point being made here is that the way an individual instructor approaches the reading process with his or her symbol-using children may or may not be closely aligned with the way the symbol child engages in languaging. In attempting to teach any academic area, the task is always simpler and more meaningful if the new content can, in some way, be related to what is known and to what can be personally interpreted. Current research has demonstrated that the way in which we acquire language, and the reading process are strongly intertwined, and the child who employs symbols as his language may also benefit from an approach that allows the two to intermingle.

Barbara Aronchick
Research Assistant
O.C.C.C. Toronto.

BLISSYMBOLICS AND ENGLISH

The syntax papers appearing in the January 1976 Newsletter presented interesting perspectives as to the relationship between Blissymbolics and English. Both positions brought a major challenge into focus for me. In teaching Blissymbolics to the child who has the ability to fully utilize the system, the instructor must give serious consideration as to his/her model and objectives as they relate to the child's perspective for Blissymbolics.

Blissymbolics is a unique visual system of communication with its own structure and organization, capable of providing its own insights to its user. For the child who mentally functions at the lower intellectual levels, the utilization of Blissymbolics to parallel simple English output is likely quite suitable. But remaining at the level of adopting Blissymbolics to English, in order to effect a one-to-one symbol word substitution (whether or not it provides immediate short term efficient communication in a particular situation) appears to me to be short-sighted, if working with the child of low average or higher intellectual capacity. If the instructor does not utilize the instances of surface symbol-word substitutions to teach the capabilities inherent in the system of Blissymbolics, he/she is missing an opportunity to expand and develop the child both in his/her communication potential and in his/her cognitive development. For example, the use of the present tense for "present" or "gift", can certainly be expedient especially if the child is "talking" to someone who is adept at making associations relating to word sounds rather than word meanings, but the child needs to be taught that he/she is making use of the "sounds like" strategy and that the Blissymbolics system will in other instances utilize the present tense in compound symbols via its meaning rather than its sound. If the child fails to appreciate this, any immediate success will be overshadowed by the child's inability to utilize the Blissymbol system creatively to accomplish the long-term goal of total communication.

Utilizing every strategy available is what the activity of communication is all about. To limit oneself in one's second system to those strategies of his/her primary system appears to me to be losing sight of the long-term goal of realizing the child's communication and intellectual potential.

Instructors have many decisions to make when they embark upon a symbol programme. One important decision must be whether or not the child to be taught Blissymbols has the ability to use the system fully and creatively. If the child appears to have the potential to master the system, then the instructor has the responsibility to teach the meaning-based structure of Blissymbolics with its potential for creating an infinite number of symbols. If the child lacks this ability but appears to be able to match the surface structures of English and Blissymbolics, then it is clear that the instructor will have to encourage the child to use symbols relating them closely to English order and sound. In these instances, however, Blissymbolics is being used superficially and the system's own structure and capabilities are being by-passed.

What we all aim for is the maximum for each symbol user in effective communication. This has to mean arriving at the capability of using the full potential of Blissymbolics and secondly supporting this with every strategy which can be derived and effectively used, from any other system. English will provide valuable strategies and procedures for the English-speaking child, particularly when communicating with persons non-experienced in Blissymbolics. It would be too bad, however, if the full capability of Blissymbolics were overlooked in the haste to mirror English.

There is much to be learned in the area of syntax for users of Blissymbolics. I hope many approaches and directions will be explored and that we will all be wiser in this area in the future. I look forward to reading further syntax perspectives in coming issues of the Newsletter!

Shirley McNaughton
B.C.F. Toronto.

Atelier "Bliss"

Le Centre de Ressource des Symboles Bliss à Montréal

affilié au

Blissymbolics Communication Foundation (B.C.F.)

présente

en collaboration avec l'école Victor Doré un

Atelier "Bliss"

Date: 28, 29, 30 avril 1976

lieu: Institut de Réhabilitation (amphithéâtre)
6300 Darlington
Montréal

Frais d'inscription: \$75.00

* Date limite d'inscription: 10 avril 1976

-Les publications du B.C.F. et quelques traductions françaises
seront en vente à l'atelier

-Les participants recevront une attestation du B.C.F.

* Nombre limits de participants

... ..

mercredi 28 avril

9:00-9:30 Inscription
9:30-9:45 Accueil
9:45-10:15 Murray Spence test

Café

10:30-11:30 Le système Bliss
11:30-12:00 Evaluation des enfants
12:00-12:15 Annonces

^
Dîner

1:15-2:00 Enseignement des symboles
2:00-2:45 Le système Bliss et le
développement de l'enfant
2:45-3:15 L'orthophoniste - audiologiste
et le système Bliss

Café

3:30-4:15 Instauration du système
Bliss à l'école Marie Leneuf
de Trois Rivières
4:15-5:00 Film "Mr. Symbol Man"

... ..

Vendredi 30 avril

9:00-10:00 Syntaxe spécifique au
système
10:00-10:15 La syntaxe et l'utilisation
des symboles en milieu
francophone

Café

Jeudi 29 avril

9:00-9:30 "Strategies" (15 min.)
Dessin des symboles (15 min.)
9:30-10:15 Expérience pratique

Café

10:30-11:30 L'expérience des symboles
auprès d'un groupe
d'enfants retardes
11:30-12:15 Les symboles auprès des adultes

Dîner

1:30-2:15 Rencontre avec les enfants
2:15-3:00 Les symboles au sein de la
famille (présentation et panel)

Café

3:15-4:00 I Intégration d'enfants
"Bliss" dans une classe
4:00-4:30 Vidéo

10:30-10:45 Adaptations
10:45-11:45 Equipement électronique
(Comhandi - Votrax)
11:45-12:15 Vidéo

Dîner

1:30-2:30 La lecture et les symboles
2:30-3:00 Discussion libre - évaluation

*N B Cet horaire est sujet à de légers changements

Parmi les participants:

- | | |
|---|---|
| - Shirley McNaughton, directrice du programme B.C.F., (Toronto) | - Mireille Doucet, prof. école Marie Leneuf, Trois Rivières. |
| - Keila W. Hunsinger, ergo. Victor Doré. | - Eitan Wugalter, directeur psychopédagogique, Miriam School. |
| - Monique G. Boucher, ergo Victor Doré. | - Marie Julien, Association de Paralysie Cérébrale du Québec. |
| - Suzanne D. Kurtness, psychologue Centre Cardinal Villeneuve. | - Mme. A. Reid, parent. |
| - Diane Benoit, ortho-audio. Victor Doré. | - Diane Ste. Marie, prof. Victor Doré |
| - Colette Castonguay, ortho-audio. Centre St. Urbain. | - Louise Paré, prof. Victor Doré. |
| | - Jean R. Charbonneau, technologiste génie médical, C.N.R.C., Ottawa. |
| | - Louise Rooney, prof. Centre MacKay. |

Le Système "Bliss est un mode de communication par symboles pictographiques et idéographiques qui connaît un grand succès auprès des jeunes enfants handicapés physiques présentant des troubles de la parole.

Ce système est également utilisé auprès d'adultes handicapés physiques, auprès de retardés et d'enfants autistiques. Son application auprès d'aphasiques et de sourdo-muets n'a pas encore été expérimentée mais ce sujet pourrait, selon nous, présenter un grand intérêt et mériterait d'être étudié.

*** *** *** *** *** *** *** *** *** *** ***

Formule d'inscription Atelier "Bliss" continué a la page suivant

Formule d'inscription Atelier "Bliss" 28, 29, 30 avril

Nom: Profession:.....

lieu de travail:

adresse:Tél:

Ci-inclus un chèque ou mandat poste au montant de \$75.00 ☐

Payable à l'ordre de:

Monique Germain-Boucher
324 Couperm #5, Laval,
Quebec, H7N 1B6

=====

DETACH AND SEND TO:-

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FOUNDATION

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(416)425-7835

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NUMBER OF SYMBOL-USERS IN YOUR SETTING:

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Children (5-12) _____

Adults _____

NEW SUBSCRIBERS

Debroah B. Billow,
5500 Lincoln Avenue,
Apt. #507,
Morton Grove, Illinois, 60053

Mrs. Joan Archibald,
District Nurse,
Ontario Society For Crippled Children,
119 Sydney Street,
Cornwall, Ontario. K6H 3H1

Mr. Peter Beveridge,
Supervisor, Special Education,
Hamilton Board of Education,
100 Main Street West,
Hamilton, Ontario.

Mrs. Edwin Lenart,
Parent,
726 Algonquin Avenue,
Bensenville, Illinois 60106

Miss Barbara Chick,
Supervisor of Nursing Service,
Ontario Society For Crippled Children,
350 Rumsey Road,
Toronto, Ontario. M4G 1R8

Nancy Jensen,
Principal,
Peter Hall Schools, Inc.,
5915 Henri Bourassa West,
St. Laurent, Quebec.

Mrs. Alva Trossman,
Symbol Instructor,
1133 Scenic Drive,
Hamilton, Ontario. L9C 1H8

Speech Therapy Dept.,
Chedoke Hospitals,
Sanatorium Road,
Hamilton, Ontario.

Sue Cooperman,
513 Maryland Avenue, #2,
Pittsburgh, Pa., 15232

Nicholas Defazio,
Lincoln Way Special Education Centre,
1400 West Main Street,
Louisville, Ohio, 44641.

Mary K. Kundrata,
Student Of Speech Pathology,
103 South Oakland,
St. John's, Michigan, 48879

Marie Larocque,
Principal,
642 Filiatrault,
Ville St. Laurent, Quebec. H4L 3V4

Frances Michaels,
8529 S. Sprinkle Road,
Kalamazoo, Michigan, 49002

Mrs. Lee Roberts,
27130 Kennedy Drive,
Dearborn Heights, Michigan, 48127

Joreen L. Wood,
Parent,
1335 Whitcomb Avenue,
Des Plaines, Illinois, 60018

Carla Anderson,
1446 University Village,
Salt Lake City, Utah, 84108

Mr. & Mrs. James A. Frohne,
929 Wilkinson Parkway,
Park Ridge, Illinois, 60068

Betsy Munro,
Speech Pathologist,
Oakdale Centre For Development Disabilities,
Lapeer, Michigan, 48446

Northwest Suburban League of
United Cerebral Palsy, P.O. Box 953,
Arlington Heights, Illinois, 6006

Sherri G. McIntyre,
Speech Pathologist,
G.R. Pearkes Clinic For Handicapped
Children,

3970 Haro Road,
Victoria, B.C., V8N 4A9

